



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

April 29, 2025

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #25-61 FY25 Capital Budget, Montgomery County Government, Department of Health and Human Services, Diversion Center (No P602301), \$650,000

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that *Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #25-61 FY25 Capital Budget, Montgomery County Government, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Diversion Center (No. P602301)* – aligns with the County’s overall objective of reducing and eliminating racial disparities and is likely to advance equitable outcomes particularly for youth and those who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC). Equitable outcomes will be contingent on factors such as program implementation, particularly as it relates to staff being both culturally reflective of the people they serve as well as trained in culturally competent best practices.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of *SA #25-61 FY25 Capital Budget, Montgomery County Government, DHHS, Diversion Center*, is to fund renovations for an off-site walk-in location to facilitate Medicaid compliance for the Diversion Center program located in Rockville, MD. Specifically, these funds are needed to comply with new State Medicaid regulations that require the County’s Crisis Stabilization Services to serve minors and walk-in clients. The current facility is unable to perform either of the new state-mandated functions, and as such, a new off-site walk-in location has been identified. This new space requires approximately \$650,000 in renovations to perform its new functions. The State has permitted the County to expand the scope of an existing Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Community Health Facilities grant award for the needed renovations that require

a 52% County match.

Supporting the Crisis Now model, the facility is intended to offer alternatives to using hospital emergency departments or defaulting to criminal justice options for people experiencing a behavioral health crisis. The facility will provide a variety of behavioral health services, including triage, crisis stabilization, and warm hand-off referrals to appropriate services for those experiencing mental health, substance use disorder, and/or other types of behavioral health crises. The Diversion Center also serves as an alternative resource for the Montgomery County Police Department, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service, and community members as opposed to more punitive options. The Diversion Center will be staffed by a multidisciplinary team to include nursing staff, licensed mental health and addiction professionals, peer specialists, and resource navigators.¹

ORESJ has previously provided analysis on supplemental appropriation requests for similar behavioral and mental health services requests. Our analysis and findings regarding this topic can be found in the following REIAs:

- REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #25-23 FY25 Operating Budget, Montgomery County Government, Department of Health and Human Services, Behavioral Health Crisis Stabilization Center and Mobile Crisis Team Pilot
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/25-23.pdf>
- REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #25-16 Department of Health and Human Services 988 Crisis Hotline Services
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/25-16.pdf>
- REIA of Special Appropriation #24-17 Department of Health and Human Services Behavioral Health and Crisis Services' Trauma Services
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/24-17.pdf>
- REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #24-9 988 Crisis Hotline Services
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/24-9.pdf>
- REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-16 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Behavior and Mental Health
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-16.pdf>

As mentioned above, the ability of this supplemental request to mitigate disparities related to mental and behavioral health will largely be contingent on program

¹ Montgomery County Government, Capital Budget. *Diversion Center*. 2025. Available at:
<https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/BASISCAPITAL/Common/Project.aspx?ID=P602301>

implementation. County data finds that BIPOC individuals represent over half of arrests in the County (27.4% Black and 33.5% Latino) compared to 35.4% of White individuals.² These disparities are even more glaring amongst BIPOC youth, with juvenile intake being largely comprised of Black youth (at 46.1%) and Latino youth (at 34.0%) compared to White youth (at 19.9%).³ Information accompanying this supplemental request affirms that the availability of services provided by the diversion center could help to reduce reliance on punitive services such as jail and limit arrests by providing those experiencing a behavioral or mental health crisis with more holistic services. They specifically state the following: *Crisis Stabilization Services have the potential to reduce racial inequities in mental health and substance use care by:*

- 1) *Reducing overreliance on law enforcement;*
- 2) *Increasing access to culturally competent care;*
- 3) *Addressing barriers to traditional healthcare; and*
- 4) *Diverting individuals from emergency rooms and jails.*

It is also important to note that consistent follow-up care must be included in services provided by the diversion center. Also included in the resources accompanying this supplemental request is the acknowledgment that youth and BIPOC individuals experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis often experience inconsistent follow-ups or gaps in long-term care, resulting in recidivism. Discharging these individuals back to the circumstances that brought them to the center to begin with, such as unstable housing, poverty, or environments with ongoing trauma, increases the likelihood of future crises. Considerations for wraparound services and supports in an effort to prevent subsequent crises should also be offered.

cc: Dr. James C. Bridgers, Jr., Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Tricia Swanson, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive

² Jupiter Independent Research Group. Racial Equity Profile Update: Montgomery County. 2023. Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ORE/Resources/Files/JUPITERRACIALEQUITYPROFILE.pdf>

³ Ibid.